



Niagara's Supporting Families Escaping Gender-Based Violence Pilot Program

Our Ask

That the Ministry of Children, Communities and Social Services (MCCSS) partner in Niagara's pilot program by providing \$610,000 annually to extend supports that allow families who exit a Violence Against Women (VAW) shelter to secure employment.

- In response, Niagara Region developed an innovative pilot to extend trauma informed wrap around supports for families after they exit a VAW shelter so they can successfully secure employment
- **To support successful attachment to Employment Ontario**, the pilot program would partner with three VAW shelters to focus on increasing skills, engagement and readiness through continued access to:
 - Counselling
 - Housing allowance
 - Other expenses such as transit and child care

Key Facts

- In Niagara, when survivors of gender-based violence transition out of a VAW shelter, there are limited supports they can access and gaps in providing a reliable network of connected social services which impacts their ability to have fulsome lives, break the cycle of poverty and contribute to community and economic prosperity
- The Niagara Poverty Reduction Strategy, endorsed by Niagara Regional Council and community in March 2024, **recognizes access to reliable income as the fastest way to lift people out of poverty and calls for stronger supports for those escaping gender-based violence**
- **In 2023, only 17 per cent of families that exited a VAW shelter in Niagara worked with Employment Ontario to secure a job.** Clients identified mental health, housing instabilities, transportation and food insecurity as barriers to pursue support through Employment Ontario.

Intended Outcomes of the Pilot Program



Increase the number of people that successfully attach to Employment Ontario



Increase the number of people who secure jobs



Aligning with Provincial Priorities

The proposed pilot program directly supports the following pillars of Ontario-STANDS:

- Supporting the stabilization of critical programs by investing in gender-based violence service providers to strengthen the foundation for critical services
- Improving transition to recovery by creating a network of connected social services essential to supporting survivors

Proposed Pilot Program

Estimated reach: 50 families per year across Niagara through existing VAW shelters

Budget: \$610,000 annually to cover cost of:

- Two trauma-trained counsellors (\$200,000)
- Housing allowance (\$600/month per family = \$360,000)
- Other expenses such as transit and child care (\$50,000)

The Impact

Investing in Niagara's pilot program can provide critical supports to families exiting VAW shelters to help them secure employment and achieve independence. This will reduce the likelihood of survivors of gender-based violence returning to the shelter system or their abuser.

Contact

Adrienne Jugley
Commissioner of Community Services
Niagara Region

905-980-6000 ext. 7420

adrienne.jugley@niagararegion.ca



1 in 5

victims of gender-based violence who transition out of service will return to live with their abuser (StatsCan)



The pilot provides access to culturally responsive and trauma-informed support through partnership with Indigenous service providers and those serving newcomers, racialized communities and rural communities

The pilot enhances women's social and economic opportunity by:



Facilitating connections to employment, skills development and training opportunities



Connecting women with the tools to overcome barriers and achieve financial independence



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Niagara's Affordable Housing Strategy and Housing Master Plan Property Portfolio

Our Ask

That the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing co-invest in Niagara's Affordable Housing Strategy and Housing Master Plan so that shovel ready projects can move forward without delay

Supporting Provincial Priorities



Co-investing in these shovel ready sites will support the Government of Ontario in **meeting the net new affordable unit obligations** under the **National Housing Strategy bilateral agreement**

Why is this Important?

- Niagara Region has developed an Affordable Housing Strategy that engages private, non-profit and local municipal partners to support a range of housing options for a total development potential of 11,000 units
- The strategy includes innovative initiatives to help address the housing crisis, including supporting the intensification of existing community housing sites
- It also supports a portfolio approach, which has allowed for the creation of a project bundle that is ready for co-investment
- **The following project bundle includes six sites that, with co-investment from senior levels of government today, will result in the construction of 555 affordable housing units tomorrow**



It also supports the government's core priority of building **1.5 million homes by 2031**

Contact

Adrienne Jugley,
Commissioner of Community Services
Niagara Region

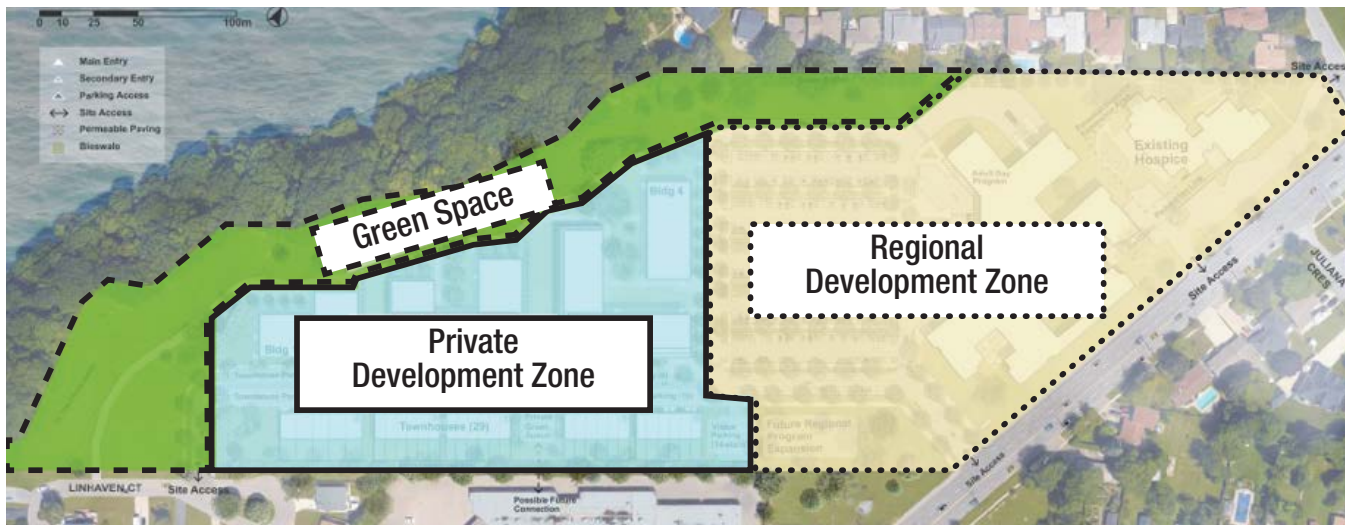
905-980-6000 ext. 3800
adrienne.jugley@niagararegion.ca

Project Bundle Ready for Co-Investment

403 Ontario Street, St. Catharines (Linhaven)

504 net new residential units (approx. 25 per cent affordable 75 per cent market and/or attainable)

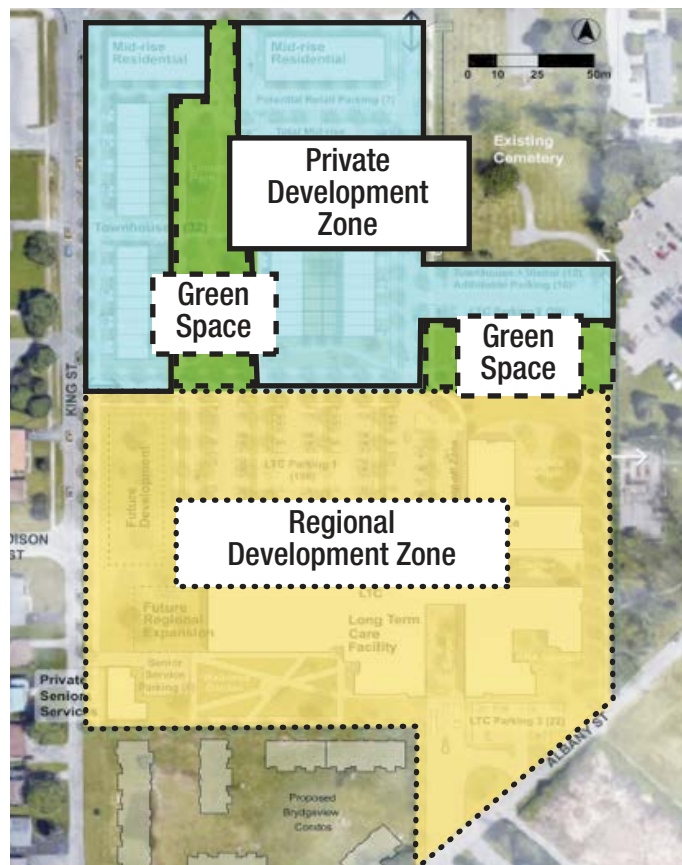
- Funding will support conceptual design, site preparedness, detailed design and construction
- Unique co-investment opportunity for the non-for-profit sector, NRH and private developers



200 Garrison Road, Fort Erie (Gilmore Lodge)

341 net new residential units (approx. 25 per cent affordable 75 per cent market and/or attainable)

- Funding will support site preparedness, detailed design and construction costs
- Opportunity for mixed use development (commercial and residential)
- Unique co-investment opportunity for the non-for-profit sector, Niagara Regional Housing and private developers



Project Bundle Ready for Co-Investment (continued)

Lions Douglas, 255 High Street, Fort Erie

62 net new affordable seniors' infill apartments

- Opportunity for co-investment at a minimum of \$75,000 per unit to support construction costs
- Has completed Site Plan Approval
- Federal government has provided seed funding through grants from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation and Federation of Canadian Municipalities



Denistoun Street, Welland

78 net new affordable units

- Funding will support site preparedness, detailed design and construction costs
- Lands may be contaminated from former armoury operations on abutting lands
- Site is located on City-owned lands that have been declared surplus for affordable housing development
- Once finalized, Denistoun will be used to house existing tenants from other sites while they are intensified



Project Bundle Ready for Co-Investment (continued)

320 Geneva St., St. Catharines

154 new housing units

- **Phase One: 13 supportive housing units, 36 bridge housing units**
- **Phase Two/Three: 105 net new affordable rental units that will be owned and operated by Niagara Regional Housing**
- Development at 320 Geneva St. will include three phases
- Phase One is underway and will result in 36 bridge housing units and 13 supportive housing units at an estimated total cost of \$16.8 million. Homelessness Prevention Program funding is supporting bridge housing units (Year 1: \$3.5 million, Year 2: \$6.1 million) and a Regional investment of \$7.2 million is supporting remaining Phase One costs.

- Additional provincial funding will support site preparedness, detailed design and construction costs associated with Phase Two and Three
- Once finalized, Geneva Phase Two and Three will be used to house existing tenants from other sites while they are intensified



Haney Street and 709 King Street, Port Colborne

50 affordable units (45 net new)

- Funding will support site preparedness, detailed design and construction costs
- Contamination has been identified on the site that requires remediation
- Site development will include intensification of existing community housing
- Once finalized, Haney Street and King Street will be used to house existing tenants from other sites while they are intensified

Modernizing Two-Tier Municipal Services – Emergency Management



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Our Ask

That the Government of Ontario reintroduce the Municipal Modernization Program (MMP) with a focus on shared service delivery between two-tier municipal governments to support Niagara Region and Local Area Municipalities (LAMs) in conducting a review of Emergency Management Organization (EMO) functions across our local governments.

Key Facts

- By 2051, Niagara is expected to be home to 694,000 residents and 272,000 jobs
- As we continue to grow, municipal governments must use resources more efficiently to meet increasing service demands while remaining affordable to current and future residents
- Throughout 2019 to 2023, Niagara's Chief Administrative Officers (CAOs) identified which shared services will work towards achieving efficiency and effectiveness and improve the resiliency of our administrations
- A workplan has been created detailing which of these shared services can move forward versus larger-scale opportunities that require external support
- Undertaking a review of EMO functions, including a best practice review, was identified as a priority initiative that requires partnership at the provincial level to move forward
- Each municipality is required to have an emergency management program under the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act, 1990*, including the Region. In addition, under the Act, lower-tier municipalities are required to align their emergency plans with the Regional emergency plan. The Regional program has also provided program and response support to the municipal programs and partners.
- With demand for emergency services rising, the current framework of roles and responsibilities is no longer efficient
- Niagara's CAOs want to undertake a review of emergency management functions and EMO model to determine if legislative changes regarding municipal responsibility would result in more efficient customer service; however, one-time costs remain a barrier



Even small efficiencies gained in emergency management will have positive and potentially life saving impacts within our local communities



\$200,000

investment would support the implementation of these region-wide shared service actions

Aligning with Provincial Priorities

Funding secured through a reintroduced MMP would support a third-party review of EMO functions between Niagara's upper-and-lower-tier municipalities to determine the ideal structure and alignment. This would directly support Ontario's Provincial Emergency Management Strategy and Action Plan (A Safe, Practiced and Prepared Ontario).

Emergency Management Across Niagara

In Niagara, 10 out of 11 local Fire Chiefs are the designated Community Emergency Management Coordinators. This can result in capacity challenges due to the importance of their role in managing the Fire Departments with the addition of Emergency Management program responsibilities.

Further, as required by legislation, Niagara Region develops and maintains an Emergency Management Program. This is in addition to providing LAMs with program and response support to address capacity challenges and the real time interconnectivity of emergency services provided at the Regional and local levels.

With 12 LAMs, the delivery of lower-tier emergency services across Niagara is varied between rural and urban communities. A review of Niagara's emergency management functions and EMO model would help identify if legislative changes allowing for a regional or shared EMO would reduce administrative burden and/or enhance customer service.

Contact

Michelle Sergi,
Commissioner of Growth Strategy
and Economic Development

905-980-6000 ext. 3276

michelle.sergi@niagararegion.ca

Moving Shared Services Forward Across Niagara

Established in 2023, the Region's Strategic Transformation Office has a dedicated team working with LAMs to explore, evaluate and implement shared services across Niagara that serve the public good, increase efficiency and effectiveness, improve customer service and coordinate use of resourcing and staffing.

In partnership with LAM CAOs, a list of shared services that are in alignment with provincial priorities have been identified and are ready to move forward; however, region-wide initiatives would benefit from provincial partnership to support one-time costs.

Municipal Modernization Program

The MMP ran from 2019 – 2022 and provided small and rural communities with funding to streamline service delivery through two streams

1. Review Stream: provided funding for municipalities to undertake program expenditure reviews to find long-term efficiencies
2. Implementation Stream: provided funding to cover a portion of project costs

Alternatively, support for one-time costs can be provided through other programs or one-time funding opportunities.

Healthy Babies Healthy Children



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Our Ask

To thank the Ministry of Children, Communities and Social Services (MCCSS) for increasing their investment in Niagara's Healthy Babies Healthy Children (HBHC) program by \$155,000.

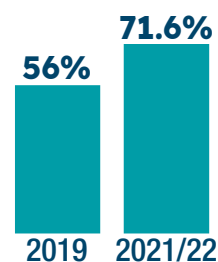
- This resulted in Niagara Region's HBHC team implementing creative, evidence-informed innovations to streamline program delivery while meeting HBHC protocol; however, all available program efficiencies have been realized
- Niagara Region is grateful for the increase in base funding as it will support our HBHC team in delivering services to the most vulnerable within our community

Key Facts

- HBHC represents the earliest opportunity to identify children exposed to social and economic risk factors that are known to have cumulative negative impacts on health and development
- **With a return on investment of as much as 13 to 1 over the lifetime of the child**, investing in the early years is a cost-effective approach to improving resident health in the long-term
- **Previous to MCCSS's funding increase, the base budget for HBHC had not increased since 2008, with inflation alone resulting in a cumulative funding gap of \$878,013**



14 risk factors have been identified by Niagara Region Public Health on the HBHC screen that are most cogent in identifying clients requiring support



Between 2019 and 2021/2022, the number of families who completed screening and had **one or more risk factors increased by 15.6%**



Aligning With Provincial Priorities

HBHC provides our youngest and most vulnerable residents with the support needed to reach their full potential. Increased provincial investment will provide some of the resources needed to allow the invaluable program to meet growing community need.

Niagara's Client Base

- Evidence suggests home visitation programs that support families with young children can positively impact lifelong health and social trajectory, with benefits seen in the areas of health, education, and the criminal justice system
- The Early Development Instrument (EDI) measures the developmental health and wellbeing of children in senior kindergarten. **In 2018, the percent of children vulnerable in Niagara was significantly higher than Ontario in three of the five domains of development:**

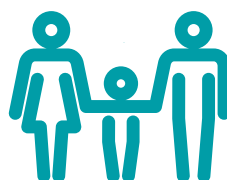
Domain	Niagara	Ontario
Physical Health and Wellbeing	18.9%	16.3%
Emotional Maturity	13.4%	11.3%
Social Competence	11.7%	9.9%

The Impact

- Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are potentially traumatic or stressful events occurring in the first 18 years of life, including physical abuse, neglect, and household dysfunction
- Children exposed to intense, frequent, or sustained stress are at higher risk of developing heart disease, stroke, cancer, diabetes, Alzheimer's and have higher rates of mental illness, all of which have substantial costs to the healthcare system over time
- A 2017 UK based study found that parenting interventions could save the health system approximately £2.5k per family over 25 years and could save the criminal justice system over £145k per person over the life course

Our Challenges

- The HBHC program is intended to be a blended home visiting program, with Family Home Visitors (FHVs) providing practical coaching support to families in collaboration with Public Health Nurse (PHN) guidance
- To stay within the provincial funding envelope, the following staffing divestments have been made:
 - The HBHC program originally utilized 11 FHVs FTEs; however, **overtime the staff complement has been reduced with remaining FHVs divested in 2023**
 - **3.5 PHN FTEs have been permanently reduced**



The increase to program base funding is a **great step in furthering provincial investment in the HBHC program**. It will support Niagara Region in making some of the required investments to prevent the cessation of services for low and medium-risk families.

Contact

Azim Kasmani,
Commissioner of Public Health & Emergency
Services, Medical Officer of Health
Niagara Region

905-980-6000 ext. 7420

azim.kasmani@niagararegion.ca



Emergency Medical Services Offloading Delays

Our Ask

That the Government of Ontario increase its funding allocation to Niagara Emergency Medical Services (EMS) to reflect the \$1,755,466 of Regional levy that has been permanently dedicated to address offload delay challenges and growing service demand.

Key Facts

- In 2023, Niagara Region EMS experienced the second highest year on record for offload delays with 28,535 hours incurred
- While addressing the systemic causes of offload delays (that is, when patients cannot be transferred from EMS care to hospital care in a timely manner) is outside of the Region's scope, Niagara continues to operate two specialized crisis response teams deployed through the 911 system to meet growing community need:
 - Mobile Crisis Rapid Response Team (MCRRT)
 - Mental Health and Addictions Response Team (MHART)
- Both teams aim to reduce the reliance on crisis services by connecting users with appropriate community care and resources
- While both teams witnessed **high diversion rates from hospitals** between 2020 and 2023, **MCRRT 81.9 per cent and MHART 77.1 per cent**, Niagara's offload delays continue to outpace the majority of the province
- In March 2024, the mean 90th percentile offload time in Ontario was 46 minutes. Out of Ontario's 72 hospitals, Greater Niagara General Hospital ranked 70th, Welland Hospital Site ranked 66th and St. Catharines Site ranked 64th.
- In response to challenges, Niagara Region has invested \$1.7 million of local property tax to meet community need
- Providing reimbursement and making this a permanent allocation is critical to the sustainability of Niagara EMS. Without additional funding, Niagara may not have enough staff to adequately respond to increased call volume.



Niagara Region EMS incurred
9,246 of offload delay hours
as of May 30, 2024



In response to offload delay challenges,
Niagara Region has invested
\$1.7 million
beyond the 50 per cent municipal
50 per cent provincial cost sharing
agreement for the EMS program

Making Progress

We are thankful for recent provincial investments in Niagara's emergency health care system, including the \$1.03 million increase in funding allocated to Niagara's Dedicated Offload Nursing Program. While this increase has provided some of the resources needed to respond to offload delays, greater partnership is required to address the significant challenges experienced within our region.

The Niagara Context

Three of Niagara's hospitals currently rank in the bottom five in Ontario for offloading time. Between 2021 and 2022, Niagara experienced a nearly **55 per cent increase in offload delays, representing almost 34,000 hours in lost time.**

Situated on a peninsula, **Niagara's unique geography minimizes our ability to utilize neighbouring EMS service to respond to critical patients.** Additionally, Niagara has a higher-than-average opioid-related death rate, aging population, rural communities and increased residents suffering from poor mental health.

The Impact

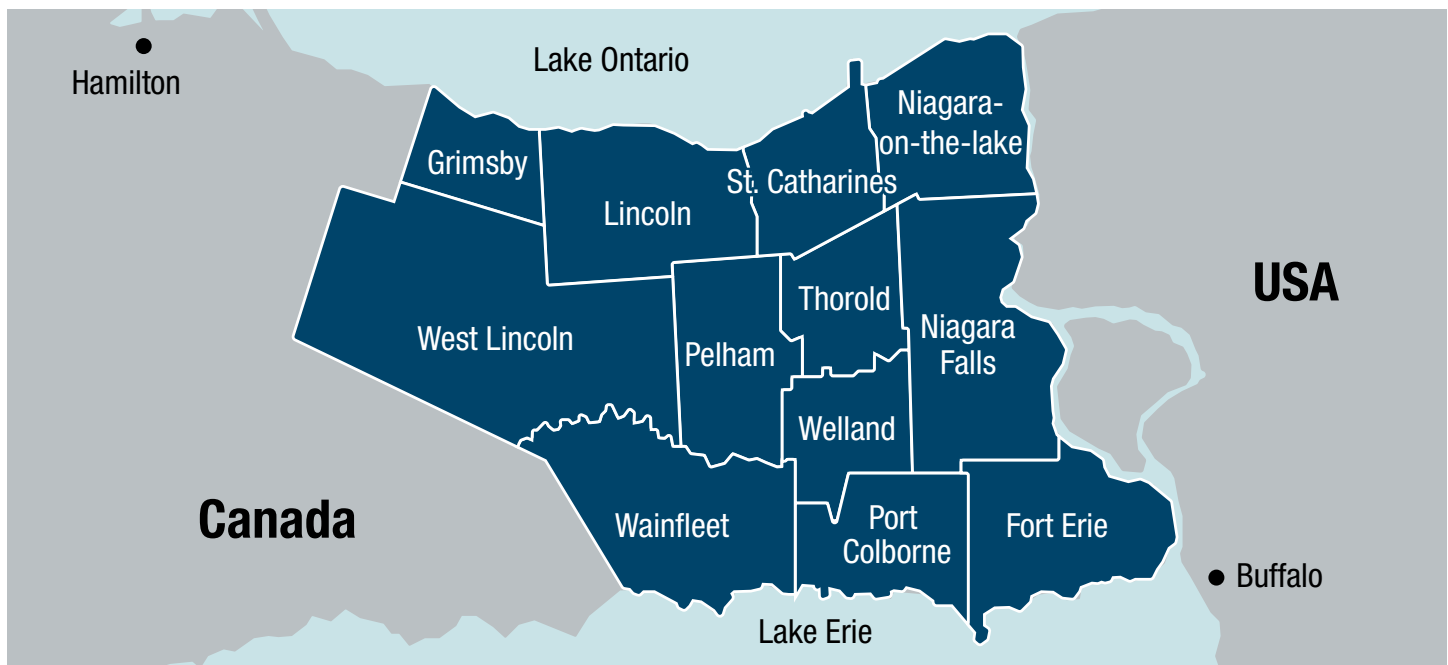
- With Niagara estimated to welcome 694,000 residents by 2051, creating a sustainable emergency care system is critical in successfully supporting growth
- Increasing investments in Niagara's EMS to reflect community need supports the Ministry of Health's Plan for Connected and Convenient Care
- Specifically, it meets the Plan's second pillar goals of providing faster emergency care and increasing paramedic and ambulance availability by reducing offload delays

Contact

Azim Kasmani,
Commissioner of Public Health and
Emergency Services, Medical Officer
of Health, Niagara Region

905-980-6000 ext. 7420

azim.kasmani@niagararegion.ca



Supporting Niagara Region's Long-Term Care Redevelopment Projects



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Our Ask

That the Government of Ontario reconsider the eligibility criteria for the \$35 per bed, per day supplement for the Long-Term Care (LTC) Construction Funding Subsidy.

Key Facts

- Niagara Region is currently redeveloping two LTC homes, Gilmore Lodge in Fort Erie and Linhaven in St. Catharines, in line with Ministry of Long-Term Care structural compliance requirements
- To help ensure future needs for service can be met, the new LTC homes are situated on campuses that have co-located services designed to delay or avoid the transfer to LTC
- The underlying premise of the LTC Campus approach is to create hubs of service for seniors, their families and the broader community in the redevelopment location
- There has been a shift in the economic environment since the release of the LTC Capital Development Funding Policy, 2020
- Additionally, LTC homes that have already started construction are not eligible for the construction funding subsidy
- As a result, there are significant financial pressures affecting the development of Niagara's LTC homes



Gilmore Lodge, Fort Erie

160 bed Long-Term Care Home and a co-located Community Wellness Hub

Construction Start:

Nov. 1, 2021

Anticipated Total Completion:

June 26, 2024



Linhaven, St. Catharines

256 bed Long-Term Care Home and co-located Community Wellness Hub

Construction Start:

July 28, 2021

Anticipated Total Completion:

Nov. 30, 2024

Aligning with Provincial Priorities

Expanding subsidy eligibility criteria to include projects that have started construction directly supports Minister Cho's recent announcement that top-up subsidies will be extended to address continued financial pressures for LTC development and redevelopment projects.

Our Opportunity

- Each LTC home has been designed based on best practice and in collaboration with long-term care staff, residents, families and community partners

The Impact

- Through implementation of heating / cooling controls and a lighting plan that incorporates dimmable lighting as well as circadian rhythm design in each room, residents will have more control over their room's environment
- Each home has been designed to optimize infection control. Resident home areas are subdivided into 16 bed "hubs" to support outbreak management protocols.
- The buildings have been designed in line with WELL Building Standards to support not only the overall wellness of residents who live in the home but also to support the wellness of staff who work in the home

Contact

**Adrienne Jugley, Commissioner
of Community Services**

905-980-6000 ext. 3800

adrienne.jugley@niagararegion.ca

Our Challenges

- Given Niagara's aging population, there is significant pressure on LTC bed availability
- Niagara Region building projects, initiated in the midst of a pandemic, have been heavily impacted by the same challenges the subsidy top-up strives to address; sharp increases in construction and material costs
- In addition to the increased costs for construction and materials, the cost of debt has substantially increased since the initial project budgets were approved
- The Region has committed debt as a funding source for the two LTC redevelopment projects in the amount of \$150,518,091, which has limited the Region's capacity for future capital development, including future LTC homes
- The Region's debt outstanding is \$332 million; therefore, the redevelopment of the two homes will increase the Region's outstanding debt by 50 per cent
- This subsidy would go a long way in supporting the Niagara Region's capacity to offset these unanticipated costs and potentially provide flexibility for future redevelopment



Linhaven, St. Catharines
256 bed LTC Home and Community Hub



Gilmore Lodge, Fort Erie
160 bed LTC Home and Community Hub